

## BY THE WAY—

May I say a word on, what seems to me, a most important matter—the training of children in kindly feelings towards dumb animals and insects? Some children have kindlier, more gentle natures than others, and never dream of maltreating a kitten or injuring a fly. Others, again, may be cruel from pure ignorance that worms, frogs, and butterflies feel pain; while many, I fear, are cruel because it is a part of their nature which has been left to the handling of those who are themselves without hearts. The baby instinct is to destroy. Watch a little child playing by the window. It sees a fly slowly wandering up the frame; the tiny trembling fingers, after much anxious following, grasp the insect and either crush it or, if the child is old enough, tear the wings from the quivering body. And the mother or nurse, seeing the child quiet and amused, takes no notice, but continues her employment. I remember a girl once telling me that her favourite amusement as a child was catching flies and tearing their wings off. That child grew into a cold, selfish woman, who could see her own father suffer agonies, through a servant's carelessness, without emotion. Last summer I heard of a boy of seven whose latest achievement had been to half drown a little kitten—his own property—and then roast it to death! And who is to blame for these and hundreds of other acts of cruelty? Alas! are not we parents—mothers more especially—often solely to blame for this and many other of our children's faults?

It is so easy for a mother to give the right turn to her children's thoughts. Two little girls, daughters of a friend of mind, were playing in the garden, waiting for their mother, who was going to take them for a walk. As she came down the garden-path she heard sounds of crying and remonstrance.

"Oh, mother!" cried Gracie, the elder one; "isn't Cicely wicked and cruel? She has stamped on a poor little worm and *killed* it."

"I didn't *hurt* it," chimed in Cicely, with a defiant little toss of her head; "'cos it didn't spete or stream out."

"No!" said her mother, gently, "it did not speak or scream out because God has not given it a voice, but it could *feel*, and mother is grieved that her little girl should be unkind to the smallest of dumb animals; but come, I hardly think Cis *meant* it, and we must go for our walk." Then, lifting the worm and laying it on the grass, my friend with the little girls started on their ramble. Gracie rolled her hoop and ran races with their collie, but Cicely kept tight hold of her mother's hand until they were almost at their

own hall door, when, suddenly clasping her two dear fat little hands together, she sobbed out,

"Oh! mov—ver, will that poor little worm go to heaven?"

My friend's answer was not told me, but you may be sure it was something comforting.

MISTRESS KITTIE.

Some time ago one of your writers mentioned "a bowl of pond water" as an interesting thing to children. I have had a bowl of the kind which I think she means this spring, and I can most truly say that it has been most successful. I am not scientific, and was never led as a child to enter into the secrets of the "world of life," but a friend told me how easy it was to keep a few creatures for the children to observe, and certainly it has proved to be an immense delight to them. I have a great deal to do, and no time now to give to study, but the elder children are at a high school, where they get science classes, and I find I have only to stand by and listen, and they tell the younger ones many things I never heard of. I hardly know which are keenest about the delights of our bowl—the elder ones, who take a can to the ponds and fish up more and more wonders, and who know what feeds on what, or the little ones, who only stand and watch and find such endless things to look at that they can hardly be persuaded to go to bed. Will it be of any use to describe our bowl a little in detail? First, I have found it well to have a bowl on a black stand; it is about ten inches across and seven inches high. It costs about four shillings stand and all. The stand is important, as it raises the lower part of the bowl up into the light, and enables us to see the creatures who love to lie at the bottom. The time of year to begin is February, as soon as the sun has begun to wake up the world of life. But in May everything is in full activity. The tadpoles are getting into their last stages. Green and flesh-coloured hydras stretch their long arms from the sides of the bowl; the great black water-beetles, scarlet pond-mites, water-fleas, and may-fly and gnat larvæ keep up an incessant motion in the water; caddis-worms, with their curious cases of sand, shells, or leaves, abound among the weeds; while delicate little newts, some not more than half an inch long, and so transparent that it is difficult to detect them when at rest, dart over the sand at the bottom in search of the thread-like worms on which they feed. I have only mentioned creatures which are easily seen without a lens; for elder children, who are the fortunate possessors of a microscope, such a bowl as I have described affords an endless source of interest. The only care needed is the addition of fresh water and weed from time to time. Watercress and starwort seem to thrive best; they keep the water quite pure and sweet, and the water-snails, of which there should be several in a large bowl, will keep the glass from getting encrusted with moss (*algæ*).

M. L. H. D.